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ABSTRACT

In order to build United States competence in world affairs a strengthening of foreign language and international studies programs is required. Few would argue that the United States should not possess an educational system which produces at least a minimal cadre of experts about other peoples and cultures. Our national security requires brainpower as well as fire power. Professionals must be educated for business and government careers who are capable of transacting negotiations on an international basis. It is no overstatement to assert that the current educational system does not produce such graduates; on a national basis only 1 of 20 high school students ever studies French or Spanish beyond the second year, and fewer than 3% of high school graduates reach any meaningful proficiency in a foreign language. As a people, United States citizens have not been conditioned or trained to believe that an awareness of the world beyond national borders is all that important. As a result, the U.S. competitive edge is being dulled. The paper provides: (1) an overview of the national scene involving international education, (2) highlights of a survey of state education agency activity, (3) a list of areas where state agencies can become positively engaged in educational improvements, and (4) a vision of a new federal agency which could be created to lend support to the states in this area. (BZ)

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Rose Lee Hayden

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BUILDING AMERICAN COMPETENCE IN WORLD AFFAIRS

Dr. Rose L. Hayden

National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies

I would like to take about thirty minutes to focus on what it means to work together to build American competence in world affairs. In order to do so, state education authorities are key. Without you, the type of parochialism, as reflected in the following anecdote, is unlikely to change. Rumor has it that a meeting of a local school board in Michigan was far from routine in that, after much correspondence, the school board had managed to get a guest speaker all the way from the state capitol. The speaker began as follows: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I've been around a good bit. I've been in Fowlerville and Clare, in Marquette and Haslett. Of course I've been in Lansing and Detroit too, and one thing I've learned -- people are pretty much the same the world over!" Let us not single out the fair state of Michigan, but assume that in order to build American competence in the world affairs via strengthened foreign language and international studies programs, we have a long way to go.

Today, I will touch upon four areas. First, I will provide a brief overview of the national scene involving international education. Second, I will share some highlights related to a survey of state education agency activity. Third, I will list areas where state agencies can become positively engaged in educational improvements. Finally, I will share with you a vision of a new federal agency which could be created to lend support to the states in this area. Although we have a Constitution in

in America which gives responsibility for education to the states, it is fair to note that the federal role, related as it is to national security and international economic policy, making is crucial. Without support from the federal level, it is not likely that the states will respond fully to meet the challenge of educating Americans about world affairs.

On the face of it, few of us would argue that America should possess an educational system which produces at least a minimal cadre of experts about other peoples and cultures; fluent in other languages and truly knowledgeable about the politics and intentions of other nations. Our national security requires brainpower as well as firepower. We must also educate professionals for business and government careers who are capable of transacting negotiations on an international basis. Even if the value of the dollar fell through the floor tomorrow, I suspect that our $155 billion dollar trade deficit would not be entirely eliminated thanks to stiff international competition and aggressive marketing policies on the part of other trading nations. There are over 300,000 business firms in the United States, but at this point, fewer than 250 account for over 80% of our exports. Surely a greater number of our firms could become more internationally effective. We require this if we are to maintain and grow economically speaking. Five out of six new jobs in the manufacturing sector depend on export performance, while one of three acres of farmland produces, today, directly for export. If you look at the figures describing direct foreign investment in your state, you will find that many firms employing Americans are foreign-based and foreign-owned. Half the Fortune 500 companies fall into this category.

American education must also produce scientists and technicians able to share and extend human knowledge on a global basis. Acid rains respect no borders, while cures for cancer may well depend on international communication of scientific discoveries.

Finally, and reflecting no order of importance, our schools and colleges must educate our citizens about the world so that they can exercise their vote more intelligently in our democracy. Foreign policy matters affect all of us, and cannot be conducted in a vacuum created, in large part, by the apathy and ignorance of our citizens.

It is no overstatement to assert that we do not now possess an educational system producing such graduates. It can almost be argued that Americans are under social pressure NOT to learn a foreign language. By the time we encounter third-generation Americans, the traces of language and culture brought to our shores by immigrant populations have disappeared. They don't all speak English out there. It does us no good as a nation when one of our Presidents is lusting after the Poles in his heart, nor when our current President is unable to share informal discussions at Summit meetings when the conversation drifts into French. Supposedly, Millard Filmore, one of our illustrious Presidents, refused to accept an honorary degree from Oxford University on the grounds that the degree was in Latin and that one should not accept anything in a language that one cannot understand. Surely as a nation, therefore, we deserve to receive the Elizabeth Peabody Award. Elizabeth Peabody supposedly walked right

into a tree and remarked: "I saw it, but I didn't realize it." We are, on a daily basis, seeing the interconnections with the rest of the world, but we are doing very little to realize anything in the sense of initiating meaningful educational reforms.

On a national basis, only one of twenty high school students ever studies French or Spanish beyond the second year. Fewer than three percent of our high school graduates reach any meaningful proficiency in a foreign language. Of those studying foreign languages in high school, 99% are studying Spanish, French, German, Latin and Italian. What about the languages spoken by the other four billion human beings who inhabit this planet? One out of five high schools in America does not offer any instruction whatsoever in any foreign language, modern or ancient. Thus, even if students wanted to study in this area, they would not have the opportunity to do so.

Somehow, as a nation, we have come to believe that we are genetically incapable of learning foreign languages. We probably believe that the Swedes are born in some magic Lamaze method with French and English being piped in. In point of fact, Swedish children study English for nine years in their schools. Even Haiti, widely regarded as one of the poorest nations in our own hemisphere, requires Spanish and English in its high schools.

When asked to name the country drained by the Amazon River, 78% of American college students in North Carolina, in 1950, correctly identified

Brazil. Last year, the correct response rate in that state was 27%. A California State University professor of world geography sadly learned that 49% of his students could not find Japan on a map, 35% could not locate France. A recent White House poll found that 49% of all Americans did not know that El Salvador was in Central America. This leads to my peace plan which would be that the United States could not enter any conflict, either overtly or covertly, in any nation that a majority of Americans were unable to locate on a map!

Our businessmen find themselves facing very stiff international competition, but are reluctant to admit that international business skills, foreign language ability and cross-cultural empathy are part of the problem of slumping exports. Let me share with you this telling anecdote.

Supposedly, an American businessman was sent to Lima, Peru, after many years of very high-level negotiation for a multi-million dollar extractive industry contract signing. This gentleman went to Peru and, as you would expect any of you who have been in Latin America, the night before the official signing of the contract, there was a wonderful reception and a cocktail party. Well, this gentleman proceeded to drink a rather inmoderate quantity of something called a "Pisco Sour." Now, a Pisco Sour is a bit like a nuclear martini--it goes down easy. Soon our man was feeling no pain whatsoever. Then the band began to play a beautiful song, and our friend spied this gorgeous creature in a long, red, velvet

gown across the room. He stumbled up to her and asked "Madam, may I have this waltz?" The answer was this: "Sir, you are rather drunk. Furthermore, this is not a waltz, this happens to be the Peruvian National Anthem. Also, I am the Archbishop of Lima!"

In a way, this should not be so surprising. As far as the United States was concerned, the contribution made by foreign trade to this country's burgeoning GNP was negligible. To be sure, the waning years of the last century firmly established the legend of the shrewd Yankee trader who sailed his clipper ships to exotic ports in the pursuit of commerce. But, by and large, the United States looked to its own internal markets for growth. A steady increase in the level of international trade assured that foreign commerce was not a major political or economic concern, as evidenced by the fact that, from 1893 to 1971, this country experienced an unbroken string of trade surpluses, comfortably exporting more than we imported. The concern for our negative trade balance and our share of the world export market, which is now a serious national issue, is thus a relatively recent phenomenon.

The end of our comparative isolation materialized shortly after World War II when significant amounts of American capital began moving abroad. It is a flow that has accelerated over the years. Today, U.S. investment abroad is in excess of $300 billion. Our 13 largest banks derive almost half their total earnings from overseas credit. More than 6,000 U.S. companies have some form of operation abroad, and approximately one-third of all U.S. corporate profits come from international activities.

We are also increasingly aware that international trade is a two-way street. Investment by foreigners in the United States is currently estimated at about $250 billion. Recent Fortune 500 lists show that at least half of our leading corporations are foreign-based and owned. In addition to investing in our industries, foreigners sell us vast amounts of raw materials, semi-finished products, and manufactured goods. In 1960, the value of imported goods and services stood at just under $24 billion, or 4.6% of our GNP. Today, this figure has increased to nearly $350 billion, or more than 13 percent of GNP. One could continue this litany of statistics, but it would serve only to emphasize one basic fact: the economic well-being of the United States is inextricably linked to the world economy. Unfortunately, as mentioned, it is a fact that far too few of our citizens fully understand.

On the surface, it would appear that all is well. The United States, with an annual output of about $3 trillion, accounts for about a quarter of the world's GNP. In 1960, when we were the world's largest exporter of manufactured goods, we held 25 percent of the world market, almost exactly our contribution to the global GNP. Today, however, our share of the world's $2 trillion export market is down to approximately 10 percent, and we have been replaced by Germany and Japan as the leaders in world manufactured exports.

Many factors have contributed to our slippage -- the cost of imported crude oil, an aging industrial plant, high interest rates, and the strength

of the dollar among them. But of all the factors, one stands out unmistakebly. Relatively few American businessmen understand the culture, the customs, or even the language of the foreign buyer. We are, to put it quite simply, a people who have not been conditioned or trained to believe that an awareness of the world beyond our borders is all that important. As a result, America's competitive edge is often lost in the tough realities of international buying and selling.

Often when American firms have ventured abroad to sell their goods, they have made some costly blunders. The Chevrolet "Nova" did not sell in Latin America. When spoken, "No va" means "it doesn't go" in Spanish. "Body by Fisher" was translated in Flemish as "Corpse by Fisher." Schweppes Tonic Water was advertised in Italy as "bathroom water," and "Come alive with Pepsi" nearly appeared in China as "Pepsi Brings Your Ancestors Back from the Grave."

In May of 1983, the National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies initiated what seemed at the time to be a rather uncomplicated task, namely that of surveying the fifty-seven states and territories to determine the extent and nature of their involvement in the matter of educating America's children to be more competent in world affairs. The National Council was concerned that decisions and actions by state authorities be more informed by solid information, especially given the national trend to require or mandate significant expansion in foreign language and international studies areas.

It is evidently more blessed to request information than to receive it, and understandably so. No one wants to fill out yet another questionnaire, terminologies and structure vary, and more to the point, it appears as if data collection and analysis is one of those areas hardest hit by state budget cuts despite the very real policy utility of the information gathered. One central truth revealed in the process of obtaining responses to this particular state-wide survey was this: the capacity of many states to gather and maintain, let alone utilize statistical information related to foreign language and international studies, or for that matter to <u>any</u> subject matter area, is uneven at best, non-existent at worst. All too often, the Christopher Columbus Syndrome sets in, namely one sets off not really knowing where one is heading, arrives without knowledge of the destination, and returns no more enlightened having made the joruney in the first place. Point : policies are being promulgated in the absence of solid facts, with the priority areas being those of math and science.

Based on our survey, we learned that of a 1982 total foreign language enrollment figure of 3,542,285, only 48,989 students enrolled in the so-called less-commonly taught languages, grades 7-12. These, of course, are the languages spoken by over two-thirds of the world's population. It should be a matter of national concern that one strategically important language, Russian, is not offered as a course of study in the public schools in eighteen states. Let one observation suffice, namely that there are more teachers of English in the Soviet Union than there are students of Russian in the United States.

Population trends show declining public school enrollments across the country. Overall public school enrollments in grades 7-12 decreased 9% between 1978 and 1981, during which period foreign language enrollments decreased 5%. Some states show impressive foreign language enrollment increases, thanks to statewide action reports, state agency encouragement and technical assistance: Alaska, 10%; District of Columbia, 57%; Florida, 19%; Louisiana, 29%; Nebraska, 17%; Utah, 33%; and Vermont, 15%. Some states have experienced excessive foreign language enrollment losses: Arizona, -46%; Delaware, -48%; Hawaii, -17%; Minnesota, -19%; New Hampshire, -26%; North Dakota, -51%; West Virginia, -19%; and Wisconsin, -17%. In none of these cases can one attribute enrollment gains in foreign language courses to overall public school enrollment gains, nor can excessive loss be similarly explained by declining enrollments in the schools. Evidently, where state and local policies endorse and support foreign language learning, gains are

made despite overall declining school enrollments, as in the case of the District of Columbia with a foreign language increase of 57%, despite a total school population decrease of 16% in the 1978-1981 period.

Turning to the importance of international studies, again the states generally report increases for the period 1969-1982, with only the Western states showing some decline in the 1980-1982 period. Of five specific subject areas, the perceived importance of these disciplines ranks highest in this order: world history; world geography; comparative culture; global environment; and conflict resolution. Relatively speaking, there has been the sharpest increase in perceived importance for global environment and comparative culture studies during the past three years.

Foreign language and international studies enrollments vary greatly from state to state. It appears as if one's involvement in these fields is as much a matter of residence as it is of preference. Is geography destiny? Is the national interest in building American competence in world affairs forever stunted by an educational system that denies access to quality international and foreign language study on the basis of local and statewide inequities? This is not to argue on behalf of any national curriculum, which would be both unconstitutional and politically unpopular. Rather, the observation must be made that the states bear responsibility for shaping statewide policies and services designed to redress gross imbalances in this regard.

There is an explosion of requirements for strengthening foreign language and international studies programs, completely disregarding, it seems, knowledge of manpower requirements.

With so many states moving to require or actively encourage study of other languages, one must raise the issue of the supply of adequately trained teachers. To address this issue, it is necessary to have some assessment of current assets. The statewide survey revealed that in the 1979-1982 period, the mean number of teachers was down for all languages, indicating a shortage of teachers in this area. Mandating courses in foreign language can only lead to great public disenchantment with this discipline if the manpower facts of life are not understood by policymakers up front. Yet the survey also revealed that state education agencies possess very little in the way of hard data related to specific disciplines or to local school districts. In a word, the states possess precious little information, to wit: nineteen states were unable to supply figures on the number of French or Spanish teachers, 21 on German, 29 on Italian (which in some regions at least is a commonly taught language), and 35 on Latin. Language coordinators in some states, as well as some state associations, have begun reporting shortages in the ranks of language teachers, but so far no hard figures exist to gauge the magnitude of the shortfall.

Questions related to the number of teachers in 1979 and 1982 reveal another disturbing trend. While interest and enrollment in languages are increasing, the choice of languages is decreasing. In many instances it

seems that schools or districts have chosen to concentrate on one language or two so as to increase cost effectiveness. Inasmuch as different languages offer different benefits, however, this practice is educationally unsound.

Similarly, the situation is hardly euphoric on the social studies front. A 1973 survey by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education revealed that fewer than 5% of the teachers being trained had any formal exposure to intercultural, international or foreign language matters. Their training was overwhelmingly parochial, and their students reflect this in their ignorance of even the basic facts of geographic life. When 20% of American children in the sixth grade, in a test of their knowledge of geography sponsored by the Dallas Times-Herald identified the outlines of Brazil on a map as those of the United States, it is sad news for our future global security and commercial prospects.

Of thirty-five states responding, the mean number of credit hours required for foreign language teacher certification is 26.7; for social studies, 33.7. No exam is required for secondary certification in social studies by 79% of the states. Half the responding states require three or fewer credit hours to be certified in world history, while 80% of the responding states require six or fewer credits for certification in world geography. Outside of U.S. and European history and related requirements,

non-Western cultures and all those "other countries" are not deemed very important, and would be taken as elective courses, if at all. With thirty-four states not responding to the sub-areas of certification questions on the survey, it appears that most states do not certify teachers in a field more narrowly specified than the generic one of social studies. As noted above, the content requirements for certification in world history and in geography are underwhelming, and do not reflect the complicated world of nations in which the United States is so inextricably involved.

The capacity of the states to assist local education agencies to improve the quality of foreign language and international studies, while never excessive, has declined in recent years--thanks in most cases to budget cuts. State legislatures and state education agencies may excel in mandating, requiring or recommending action, but flunk the service and support of local authorities test overall. One inhibitor, perhaps also related to funding, is a real lack of data related to school districts. A good percentage of state agency organizational links tends to be with regional groups of sister state agencies, rather than with local authorities or with local, state and national professional associations. Even spotty reporting reveals a very uneven ability of state agencies to assist schools and teachers to achieve the educational goals being mandated or recommended from above.

Clearly, organizational units within state education agencies could play a substantially more positive role in the implementation of improved foreign language and international studies programs. Closer

working ties with universities and colleges, and with professional organizations are also indicated. At this moment, state agencies seem almost perversely isolated from the human resource bases within their own jurisdictions.

Of seventeen areas of state education agency activity in support of foreign language and international studies programs, only five are reported in 1982, with eleven areas decreasing given budget cuts and staff turnover. Yet, the statistical manipulation of data reveals a strong positive correlation between certain types of activity and enrollments in this field. As would be expected where interest in foreign language and international studies is percieved to be higher, secondary foreign language enrollemnts are higher in those states. Emphasis on international studies interest tends to trigger more foreign language enrollments than the reverse. The strongest positive correlation is between state-agency-sponsored position papers and commission reports. State agencies, by producing such guidelines, obviously achieve real policy and practical results.

International exchanges of students, relationships with schools abroad, and state and local staff exchanges have the second strongest positive effect on actual school practice. To cite one example, in 1982, twenty-six states reported some involvement in promoting or assisting student exchanges. In these states, foreign language enrollments at the secondary level averaged 20%, compared with 9% for those states reporting no such activity.

Legislative requirements and recommendations do increase enrollments,

but not so significantly as one would expect. Thus, in those states requiring foreign lanugage, 21% is the mean for foreign language enrollments, while 17% is the mean enrollment level in states not mandating such study. Again, in the area of providing curriculum materials and technical assistance to local authorities, there is a slight positive correlation, but no discernible breakthroughs in achieving substantially higher enrollments. Finally, where information is good related to state and local agency staff and activity, there is an across-the-board higher enrollment figure. The major point to underscore for state policy makers is that the existence of a specialized unit within a state agency and a regulatory presence alone does not generate the same level of local involvement as do activities producing useful policy guidelines, position papers and international exchange programs for students, teachers and staff.

Sometimes tails indeed wag dogs. The policy implications of this particular survey most likely have ramifications for state education agency involvement in other areas of education as well. State education agencies and state legislators are actively responding to public outcries for excellence in education and are facing tough policy choices in the process. Financial resources remain limited in the face of sweeping demands. Policy decisions based on assumptions rather than facts are less than ideal. This information and policy analysis void must be filled, and not just for the fields of foreign language and international studies. Better working relationships must be forged within the states between state authorities and institutions and associations whose human resource base and professional assets have been largely overlooked. Inequities and gaps in the curriculum must also be addressed so that

obtaining a quality education is not so capriciously a matter of the particular district or state in which a child resides. Geographic roulette serves state and national interests poorly, and cheats the young.

In order to play a more effective part in enhancing American competence in world affairs, state education agencies require additional financial support. In all likelihood, this is an area where federal, categorical financing is needed and needed now. There is no private sector funding available on anything like the scale necessary to undertake such massive educational reform. Of approximately $60 billion dollars of philanthropic giving last year, only one in ten dollars is supplied by all our private and corporate foundations. The rest is charitable giving by individuals. And more to the point, only 2 cents on that one dollar of organized giving ever supports international education.

The so-called "New Federalism" represented by block grants has not served this area well. Far fewer federal dollars are recycled to the states, who in turn divvy up the bucks by sending these monies on to the districts. Legally speaking, there is no reason why block grant monies cannot be utilized to support foreign language and international studies programs. Things just do not seem to work that way. Literally, in this case, every level of government is "passing the buck."

The time has come to create a new federal approach, a National Trust Fund in support of internationalizing education. If Congress set aside 3% of the general receipts to the Treasury - NOT CURRENT YEAR TAX DOLLARS BUT RATHER FOREIGN GOVERNMENT LOAN REPAYMENTS - this nation could support, in perpetuity, a National Foundation for International Education. One principal function of this entity would be to provide state education agencies with funding for teacher training, curriculum development, foreign exchanges, and research and dissemination projects.

As this concept develops, those of us promoting this notion will need your support. I am confident that as a people, we can get back to the business of forging a better partnership between the various levels of our public system of education--locales, states and feds.

America's destiny is not so manifest these days. We ignore the world only at our own peril, and jeopardize our future security, trade and cultural vitality when those graduating from our schools cannot locate China on a map or hold even a halting conversation in any language other than our own.

Whereas it may well be that most children will become neither diplomats nor global business wizards, every American is and will be touched by world events. Remeber, today's schoolchildren will live well into the next century when international entanglements promise to be even more dangerous and complex. Some states are responding to this challenge, but the record is spotty at best. The time has come for

the states to move beyond regulations, towards building those professional partnerships that will prepare today's children to be effective citizens in tomorrow's world. This nation's destiny requires nothing less.

* * *

No nation has a monopoly in this world on educating their children about the rest of the world. The Swedes are not born speaking English and French and German. People are small town animals wherever they are born. All of us make mistakes with whatever languages we try to use. Therefore, we just have to keep trying to learn and use them. I was in a Turkish hotel, for example, and saw a flyer which said: "Come to our restaurant and try the Middle-Eastern cuisine--you can dine in a European ambulance." I think they meant "ambience." In Rome, a sign in front of a doctor's office read: "Specialist in women and other diseases."

And finally, my favorite example of the hazards of language. A colleague named Eleanor Jorden was traveling to Tokyo on business. When she arrived at her hotel after a long journey and suffering from jet lag, she called the front desk to make sure she would receive a wake-up call for the next morning. The call did come on schedule, with a sweet little Japanese voice at the other end which intoned: "Dr. Jorden, your time has come!"

And so has mine. Once again, thank you for your kind attention and for all you have done to improve our international competences via your own state's educational programs.